



The Last Robin

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The Last Robin

Lyrics and Sonnets



BY

Ethelwyn Wetherald

Author of

"The House of the Trees," "Tangled in Stars,"

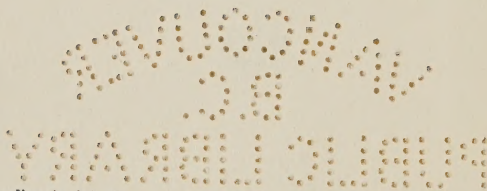
"The Radiant Road,"

etc.



Toronto
WILLIAM BRIGGS
1907

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PREFATORY NOTE

NEARLY one-half of the within poems appear in book form now for the first time; the rest are selected from previously published volumes.

E. W.

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CONTENTS

LYRICS—

	PAGE
The Last Robin	9
The Screech-owl	10
The Fire-weed	11
As Leaves in the Stream	11
Falling Leaves	12
A Fairer Art	13
My Orders	13
Pluck	14
One Day of Ecstasy	14
A Wish	15
The Birds' Hour	16
The Door of Spring	17
Green Beginnings	18
In Earliest Spring	19
April in the City	20
The Heart of Spring	21
A Summer Sleeping-room	23
Alone in the Wood	25
The Wild Columbine	26
Her Plea	27
Enchantment	28
If You Love Me	29
The Branch to the Bird	30
When It's Time for Leaves to Fly	31
Mated	32
The Rose in the Heart	33

LYRICS—*Continued.*

	PAGE
Reminder	112
My Guardian Angel	113
The World Well Lost	114
The Wild Jessamine	115
Beginning and End	117
Come Back Again	118
At the Window	119
At Dawn	120
Responsiveness	121
Bitter-sweet	122
The Bride of Death	123
Pity Me Not	124
Work	125
A Line from Emerson	125
The Fields of Dark	126
Green Boughs of Home	128
Earth's Silences	130
If One Might Live	131
Unheard Niagaras	132
Home	133
Limitlessness	134
Unspoken	135
Under the King	137
Strength	138
The Old Home	139
The Deserted House	141
The Twins	143
The Blind Man	145
A Midday in Midsummer	147
The Roads of Old	149
September	151
The Wind Spirit	153
The Wind of Death	154
The Prayer of the Year	156

CONTENTS.

v

LYRICS—*Continued.*

	PAGE
Dead Leaves	157
A Winter Picture	158
The Chickadee	159
The Patient Earth	160

SONNETS—

The Larger Love	165
The Climbing Trees	166
The One Face	167
Comrades First	168
The Prairie	169
Absence	170
Youth in Age	171
Minnehaha	172
The Red Rose	173
Point Defiance Park	174
There is a Solitude	175
The Followers	176
Each to Her Own	177
At Waking	178
Out-door Air	179
In the Crowd	180
The Snow-fall	181
Love's Phases	182
Good-bye	183
Telepathy	184
At Parting	185
In a Dark Hour	186
Words	187
Tangled in Stars	188
In August	189
October	190
Winter	191
To February	192
The Silent Snow	193

Lyrics

THE LAST ROBIN.

THE spring was red with robins,
 The summer gay with their song;
 What doest thou here at the bleak of the year,
 When the frost is sharp and strong,
 When even the red from the leaves has fled,
 And the stormy night is long?

Silent, alone, thou givest
 An April gleam to the lane;
 A sense of spring to the sorrowing
 Of autumn wind and rain.
 Dear gleam, good-bye! the dark is nigh;
 Good-bye—come back again!

THE SCREECH-OWL.

HEARING the strange night-piercing sound
Of woe that strove to sing,
I followed where it hid, and found
A small soft-throated thing,
A feathered handful of gray grief,
Perched by the year's last leaf.

And heeding not that in the sky
The lamps of peace were lit,
It sent abroad that sobbing cry,
And sad hearts echoed it.
O hush, poor grief, so gray, so wild,
God still is with His child!

THE FIRE-WEED.

WHERE forest fires have swept the land,
The musing traveller sees
These little bright-faced flowers stand
In crowded companies.

So in the heart that grief has charred
New fairness decks the sod,
And every blackened life is starred
With tender gifts from God.

AS LEAVES IN THE STREAM.

As dead leaves lie beneath the stream
That merrily doth sing,
And give its flow a darker gleam
By their deep coloring,

So every stream of joy that starts
Hath its remembered dead,
And love runs richer in our hearts
Because of sweetness fled.

FALLING LEAVES.

SILENTLY as twilight shades woodland leaves are dropping;

Each through stilly autumn air a winding way is taking;

Each through yielding golden air a path of beauty making,

Loosening and wavering and exquisitely stopping.

Little fellow-travellers, gentle, frail and flaming,

Near of kin you are to me as brother is to brother;

I, like you, am journeying to the self-same mother,
On a path of mystery and beauty past my naming.

MY ORDERS.

My orders are to fight.
 Then if I bleed, or fail,
 Or strongly win, what matters it?
 God only doth prevail.

The servant craveth naught
 Except to serve with might.
 I was not told to win or lose,—
 My orders are to fight.

A FAIRER ART.

THE soul of beauty speaks through roughest stone
 And makes the sculptor's task
 A glory and a rapture. He alone
 May lift the clinging mask.

Be thine a fairer art: to bare thine ear
 To life's unresting sea,
 And in its harshest discords feel and hear
 The soul of harmony.

ONE DAY OF ECSTASY.

ONE day of ecstasy my soul has known:
All through the black night I had striven alone
With Pain's unsated beak at flesh and bone.

Then just at dawn, like to a healing rain,
Soft slumber fell on writhing nerve and brain;
I woke to find my enemy was slain.

Body and soul sheer bliss! The hours a fleece
Of young lambs nestling at the feet of Peace.
How will it be when all life's pain shall cease?

A WISH.

AH, when our eyes look backward
On visions deeply sweet,
And consciously life's remnant
Is narrowing to our feet,

May every joy that perished
Be mirrored in our gaze,
And in our speech the beauty
Of all our vanished days!

PLUCK.

THANK God for pluck—unknown to slaves—
The self ne'er of its Self bereft,
Who, when the right arm's shattered, waves
The good flag with the left.

THE BIRDS' HOUR.

THE world at noon belongs to the sun,
At eve to the home-coming herds;
But while the dew is pearly—very, very early—
The world belongs to the birds.
As still as in a dream lie the meadow and the stream,
'Neath the soaring and outpouring of the birds.

Long, long before there is life at any door,
Or smoke at any roof, or laughing words
Of children fresh from sleeping, the outer world is
steeping
In the heaven-given rapture of the birds.
Not a thought of grief or care can enforce admission
there
Through the winging and the singing of the birds.

THE DOOR OF SPRING.

How shall we open the door of Spring
 That Winter is holding wearily shut?
 Though winds are calling and waters brawling,
 And snow decaying and light delaying,
 Yet will it not move in its yielding rut
 And back on its flowery hinges swing,
 Till wings are flapping
 And woodpeckers tapping
 With sharp, clear rapping
 At the door of Spring.

How shall we fasten the door of Spring
 Wide, so wide that it cannot close?
 Though buds are filling and frogs are trilling,
 And violets breaking and grass awaking,
 Yet doubtfully back and forth it blows
 Till come the birds, and the woodlands ring
 With sharp beak stammer—
 The sudden clamor
 Of the woodpecker's hammer
 At the door of Spring.

GREEN BEGINNINGS.

WHEN October's shining arms are drooping,
Burdened with the gold of all her winnings,
Oft I think of April, gleaming, glinting,
On a million little green beginnings.

Or within the city's dust and clamor
Fancy spins a web, and all her spinnings
Are of bending branch and running water
And a sward of little green beginnings.

Spring and springtime hopes are with us always.
E'en the heart grown aged in its sinnings
Holds till death the budding boughs of promise,
With their myriad little fair beginnings.

IN EARLIEST SPRING.

WHEN roofs are steaming in the sun
And down and down the big drift sinks,
And at his door the woodchuck blinks,
And streams that in the noontide run
Are prisoners when day is done,
I know,
Whatever winds may blow,
The springtime, the springtime has begun.

When easier opes the arbor door,
And paler grow the lilac tips,
And yellower glow the willow whips,
And lambs that roam the meadow o'er
Seem daily snowier than before,
I know,
Whatever winds may blow,
The winter, the winter is no more.

APRIL IN THE CITY.

APRIL sunshine along the street
Is turning the motes of dust to gold.
Scant is the green to our longing feet,
To our longing eyes few buds unfold.

Only in vision are slopes unrolled
And orchards full as their arms can hold,
And stories in exquisite cadence told
By the willowed stream in its sweet retreat.

Yet even here the heart grown cold
Flushes with sudden inward heat,
When April sunshine along the street
Is turning the motes of dust to gold.

THE HEART OF SPRING.

WHEN the grass is new, and not as long
As a baby's tender hand,
When the early light is a sea of song,
By a delicate dawn-wind fanned;
When the buds like little green stars appear
And the willow flames in gold,
I feel that the inmost heart of the year
Is as full as it can hold.

Drip, drip, I hear it overflow,
Where the rivulets slip to the stream below;
At the branch's tip, where the raindrops cling,
I see the overflowing of the heart of Spring.

When the forest aisles are thronged with tints
Of a visible ecstasy,
When the morning fields are warm with hints
Of a wealth that is to be,

When the old clods burn and the old groves ring
With a joy that cannot stop,
I know that the full-pressed heart of Spring
Is running over drop by drop.

Drip, drip, I see it overflow,
Where the roof-streams slip to the pipes below;
At the rain-tub's lip, where the swift drops sing,
I hear the overflowing of the heart of Spring.

A SUMMER SLEEPING-ROOM.

HERE is my summer sleeping-room
Within a grove of towering pine;
These latticed walls, this fragrant gloom,
This ever-open door, are mine.

However hot the heart of day,
When all its insect cares have flown,
Unto the green I nightly stray
In moonlit silence all alone.

Four pines are close. They pierce the roof,
One at each corner of my nest,
And all my dreams are trouble-proof
As though four angels watched my rest.

Tree-toads and crickets sing to me,
The screech-owl sends his note from far;
The night wind moves, and dazzlingly
Comes to my couch the eastern star.

At dawn I hear the squirrels run,
A larger wind its coolness pour,
And with the first red ray of sun
Behold the Redbreast at the door.

Oh, sweet to waken with the flowers,
A morning spirit steeped in calm,
And bear through all the dusty hours
The night-pure heart, the breath of balm.

ALONE IN THE WOOD.

OUT-GAZING from her cabin door
On lift of pine and leap of stream,
She felt her spirit shine and soar
With arching bough and foamy gleam.

The slender sunbeam driven through
The tangled brake or mossy mould
Pierced all her wandering fancies, too,
And held them with a nail of gold.

Her spirit greatened with the bud,
And brightened with the leaves that fell,
And life with her was at the flood
When melting snow o'erwhelmed the dell.

The naked, newborn birds, that slept
Secure and warm when storms were loud,
Gave her their perfect trust. She kept
Her bird-like faith beneath the cloud.

THE WILD COLUMBINE.

Out from the edge of a barren rock
Lightly sprang the columbine,
Wild and red as the word unsaid,
As the wish that sped
From the heart of your heart to the heart of mine.
Say not the word, let it die unheard,
Let the wish unspurred
Waste away under key and lock.
Still we have seen them, felt them ours;
From the rocks we tread with accustomed feet
Sprang those delicate, blood-bright flowers,
Wild, and ah, so wistfully sweet.

HER PLEA.

TREAD lightly, lightly, eager feet,
For every footfall when we part,
And every footfall when we meet,
Awakes my heart—awakes my heart.

Speak shyly, shyly, pleading eyes,
The yearning message you impart,
For all your questions and replies
Are in my heart—are in my heart.

Steal softly, softly, sweetest tone,
The tender springs from which you start
To flow into mine ear alone
O'errun my heart—o'errun my heart.

Love gently, gently, Love of mine,
Through all the years where'er thou art,
For every quick'ning thought of thine
Doth stir my heart—doth stir my heart.

ENCHANTMENT.

DEAREST, give your soul to me;
 Let it in your glances shine;
 Let a path of ecstasy
 Stretch between your eyes and mine.
 Should you press me to your heart,
 That enchanted,
 That enchanted little pathway must depart.

Dearest, give your thoughts to me;
 Let them through the distance drear
 Make unceasing melody
 To my raptured inner ear.
 Should you clasp me—ah, the cost!
 All that elfin,
 All that elfin music were in clamor lost.

IF YOU LOVE ME.

If you love me, tell me so
In your greeting, in your eyes,
In your footstep, swift or slow,
In your tender-voiced replies;
Love that stays in heart and blood
Lives forever in the bud,
Once in words 'tis past recall—
Down the lovely petals fall.

If you love me, tell me so,
As the dawn may hint of noon,
As a glance the deep heart's glow,
As hepaticas of June;
When the summer riot runs
'Neath the glare of burning suns,
Naught so fair—not anything—
As the first faint breath of spring.

THE BRANCH TO THE BIRD.

SING to me, Love! My bloom belongs
To you, and matches all your songs.

Charm, charm my ear,
And I shall hear
Your voice amid my dewy blossoms,
More sweet than they—more dear.

Sing to me, Love! The bloom has gone,
And yet the long, long months go on.

Charm, charm my heart,
And I shall start
To dream amid the autumn shadows
That spring did not depart.

WHEN IT'S TIME FOR LEAVES TO FLY.

WHEN it's time for leaves to fly,
 Winds shall blow and leaves shall go;
 When it's time for Love to die,
 Close his eyes and lay him low.

When it's time for frost to sting,
 Birds are dumb and streams are numb;
 Speak not of another spring—
 Nevermore OUR spring shall come.

Nevermore our lives shall be
 What they seemed when first we dreamed,
 Since the leaves of memory
 Drop where passion's river gleamed.

MATED.

For the bird the rosy branch,
 For the lake the sunset dying,
 For the bee its clover ranch,
 For the pine the night wind sighing;
 For every tree that is bending
 The sound of a stream descending;
 For the lonely attic window
 The sky with its starry host,
 And for every heart that is troubled
 The heart that needs it most.

How happy the grey fence-rail
 With a russet chipmunk running,
 How grateful the windflower pale
 In the springtime noonday sunning.
 How charmed is the twilight falling
 At the voice of the robin calling;
 How tenderly falls the moonlight
 On a cold and sterile coast,
 And how good for the heart of the troubled
 Is the heart that needs it most.

THE ROSE IN THE HEART.

GRANT me one wish, O heart, I cried,
 Give me a rose each day of the year.
 "How can that be?" my heart replied,
 "Roses bloom not when thoughts are sere;
 Roses bloom not in autumnal moods,
 Nor in the soul's bleak solitudes,
 Nor yet in a restless springtime storm;
 But give me a nature fair and warm,
 And a tender, June-sweet atmosphere,
 And roses are yours each day in the year."

THE HUT BY THE SEA.

HERE is my hut beside the hilly sea,
 A sweet, small resting-place, so soft and warm,
 Though framed by desolate immensity,
 And rocked within the arms of every storm.

Each home where love abides is even so,
 A steadfast joy beneath a changing sky;
 And all the storms of life that round it blow
 Are but its cradle and its lullaby.

MOTHER AND CHILD.

I SAW a mother holding
Her play-worn baby son,
Her pliant arms enfolding
The drooping little one.

Her lips were made of sweetness,
And sweet the eyes above;
With infantile completeness
He yielded to her love.

And I who saw the heaving
Of breast to dimpling cheek,
Have felt, within, the weaving
Of thoughts I cannot speak;

Have felt myself the nestling,
All strengthless, love-enisled;
Have felt myself the mother
Abrood above her child.

THE UNFORGOTTEN GRAVE.

I HEARD a blackbird whistle
By a "forgotten grave,"
Where mullein weed and thistle
In rank profusion wave,
As though they had been bringing
Some gift to match the singing.
What could have been the message
Of comfort that they gave?

They brought—these kindly neighbors
In rustic cap and gown—
The fruit of summer labors,
Their blankets and their down.
O sweet must be the sleeping,
Afar from human weeping,
Of him, enwrapped in kindness
From weary feet to crown.

YOUTH AND AGE.

BENT over some heroic book,
 In nights gone by, his boyish head
 So filled with eager dreams he took
 Them with him to his bed.
 The splendid strife, the rush of life,
 The trump of fame, inspiring, strong,
 His heart so stirred he scarcely heard
 His mother's slumber song.

But now the glowing book of life
 Is falling from his nerveless hand;
 Gone are the splendors of the strife,
 The conquering hopes—a daring band;
 No plaudits pierce those aged ears,
 No trump of fame, though loud and strong,
 He only hears across the years
 His mother's slumber song.

EVERY COMMON DAY.

EVERY common day that we live is clasped and jewelled with love;

The stars of night are beneath it, the morning stars above.

The peace of God broods on it, as on her nest the bird,
And over its weariest moments the music of hope is heard.

So, when my life-work is finished, and I go to God for my wage,

I wonder if He can give me a heavenlier heritage
Than to feel that each day that I live is clasped and jewelled with love,

With the stars of night beneath it and the morning stars above.

THE OLD HOME.

My thoughts are with my far home, my old home, my
only home,

My mother waiting at the door to welcome me
within;

Her eyes are like November leaves upon the furrowed,
lonely loam,

Her hair is white as night-frost when all the boughs
are thin.

I want to see the moon climb the arms of our great
pine again,

I want to feel the dew fall upon the pasture path,

I want to haunt the wood glades and dream that they
are mine again,

I want to hear the Bob White across the aftermath.

I want to see the white stream in springtime burst its
tomb again,

I want to feel the young grass about my jaded feet,

I want to set my heart free and give it air and room
again

To move to those forgotten strains to which it used
to beat.

O mother, mother, mother, do you know that barefoot
boy of yours,

Who went up to the city and was lost in heat and
strife,

Has found no bliss that matches with that quiet har-
vest joy of yours?

That wealth and depth of living beggars all that he
called life.

My thoughts are with my old home, my wide-boughed,
clover-meadowed home,

Astir beneath the skies of peace when morning birds
begin,

Asleep beneath the early stars—my deep-grassed, ivy-
shadowed home,

With Mother waiting at the door to welcome me
within.

YOUR FACE.

Your face, dear love, your face!
 Not that which meets your fellow-man's regard,
 Polite or sympathetic, sometimes hard,
 Indifferent, reticent, self-poised and still,
 The keen thought-miller toiling at his mill—
 But that which lights our small abiding-place,
 Your face, dear love, your face!

Your face, dear love, your face!
 That which, returning through the evening gloom,
 You bring into this waiting, happy room.
 The tired look, yet glad, as glad and warm
 As tender sunset after hours of storm.
 As if some hidden door were opened wide
 Within your heart on its home-loving side,
 A look that is a bodiless embrace—
 Your face, dear love, your face!

CROSSES AND KISSES.

THE letters I get from my little girl
Are sure to end like this:

x x x x x x

A score of crosses, row on row,

And every cross is a kiss.

And through the miles that separate

My own little one from me,

I feel the tug of her loving arms,

And her loving face I see.

Every cross is a kiss, she says;

My crosses are never few.

They wait for me when I wake at morn,

They follow the long day through.

I never dreamed they were sent in love—

Ah me, what good I miss

When I push away with angry hands

The cross that was meant for a kiss!

We mortals walk in a world of love,
But we make it a world of care.
Some crosses are sharp and bring the blood,
And some are heavy to bear.
But I think when we go in the arms of Death
To heights of perfect bliss,
We shall see at a backward glance below
That every cross was a kiss.

A CANTY THOUGHT.

JOHN ANDERSON, my jo, John,
 How strange I did not know
 Until last night that jo meant love—
 A Scotchman told me so,
 And also said that canty day
 Meant simply happy day;
 Good lack! 'tis time my ignorance
 Was lightened by this ray.

John Anderson, my jo, John,
 How dear a word is jo!
 Sweet as a streamlet's flow, John,
 That murmurs soft and low.
 It seems that love-notes from my love
 The postman has not brought,
 They're simply jo notes from my jo—
 O canty, canty thought!

TREE MEMORIES.

THE woodland stretched its arms to me,
And into its heart I went;
While by my side invisibly
Walked musing-eyed Content.

The woodland spake no word to me,
But, oh, its thoughts were sweet;
Against my spirit like a sea
I felt the thought-waves beat.

Before my vision, starved and dull,
The wood-shapes dropped their gold;
The young child-trees were beautiful,
More beautiful the old.

Within their halls of memory
What heavenly scenes are drawn:
The stream, the wild birds' company,
The sky's cool face at dawn,

The golden lances of the sun,
The rain that feels its way,
The twilight steps that, one by one,
Lead to the moon's white ray;

The multitude of bright leaf-forms
Engraved on earth and air,
The black and gold of midnight storms,
The blue that violets wear;

The wind that brings from clover farms
A picture white and red,
Or later gathers in his arms
The woodland's fragile dead.

These throng the greenwood memories;
Upon this perfumed track
The thoughts of all the silent trees
Go wandering back and back.

This is the charm that cometh last,
Of all their sweets the sum:
The feeling of green summers past,
And fair green springs to come.

THE CROWNING SATIRE.

HERE is the crowning satire,
 In a world where springtime wreathes
 The naked forest arches
 With a loveliness that breathes;
 Where a myriad blooms are thickening
 With beauty Earth's old crust,
 That men are chasing dollars,
 And the women chasing dust.

The splendor of a palace
 Is naught to that of a hut
 Rained on by the gold of autumn,
 With a door that is never shut;
 With Peace for the nearest neighbor,
 And Joy and Love and Trust
 Singing in woods and waters,
 Far off from dollars and dust.

Ah, would it be a wonder
If the gods above us bowed
Should rebuke us in the thunder,
Should scoff at us in the cloud,
Should mock at us in laughter,
That swept from earth in a gust
The men that are chasing dollars
And the women chasing dust?

O housekeepers peerless and cheerless,
And men who are gluttons of gold,
The only joy that is tearless
Can never be swept up nor sold;
It beckons to us from the branches,
It yearns to us from the blue:
O seekers of dust and dollars,
It is your dream come true!

TO THE WISTARIA.

(IN THE SOUTH.)

I SEE you on the cedar swinging,
 To higher branches reaching, clinging,
 Then all your lovely weight out-flinging
 Upon his dark and stately strength;
 O many and many an odorous blossom
 From overflowing arms you toss him!
 The royal purple flung across him
 Is dripping perfume all its length.

Upon the cedar branches swaying,
 You seem a flowery fountain playing,
 Then April comes—no more delaying—
 The flakes drop down in sun and gloom;
 The garden seat they thickly cover,
 The girl that leans against her lover
 Hears in the purple air above her
 Love's whisper through a storm of bloom.

THE RED-WINGED BLACKBIRD.

BLACK beneath as the night,
 With wings of a morning glow,
 From his sooty throat three syllables float,
 Ravishing, liquid, low;
 And 'tis oh, for the joy of June,
 And the bliss that ne'er can flee
 From that exquisite call, with its sweet, sweet fall—
O-ke-lee, o-ke-lee, o-ke-lee!

Long ago as a child,
 From the bough of a blossoming quince,
 That melody came to thrill my frame,
 And whenever I've caught it since,
 The spring-soft blue of the sky
 And the spring-bright bloom of the tree
 Are a part of the strain—ah, hear it again!—
O-ke-lee, o-ke-lee, o-ke-lee!

RETICENCE.

And the night is tenderly black,
The morning eagerly bright,
For that old, old spring is blossoming
In the soul and in the sight.
The red-winged blackbird brings
My lost youth back to me,
When I hear in the swale, from a gray
fence rail,
O-ke-lee, o-ke-lee, o-ke-lee!

RETICENCE.

THE violet's life is in the sheltering glade.
The rosebud, forced to meet admiring eyes,
In many-leaved withdrawal is arrayed;
'Tis reticence in which her beauty lies.

Thou art a rose, my child. Enchantingly
She veils herself, e'en from the eye of morn,
For, stripped of all her soft defences, she
Is but a mark for pity and for scorn.

LOST.

THEY journeyed east, they journeyed west,
From sea to sea did roam;
I, changeless, chose the summer leaves,
The winter lamps, of home.

They came and viewed my whitened hair,
My face writ like a page,
“Ah, you,” they said, “have journeyed far
Into the realm of age!”

A traveller against my will,
No longer would I roam.
But where—where are the sheltering boughs?
Where are the lamps of Home?

THE HEART AND THE CROSS.

O PILGRIM, faring through the night,
 Why singest thou so cheerily?
 The cross upon thy shoulders laid
 Of heaviness itself is made,—

“But oh, the heart beneath is light,
 And so my load is naught,” said he.

O sluggard, drooping drowsy head,
 Why moanest thou unceasingly?
 By some unknown benignant law,
 Thy slender cross is built of straw.

“The heart beneath is made of lead,
 And so my load is great,” said he.

O Angel, treading life's long road
 With me; explain this mystery:
 When men find burdens hard and strange
 Each longs his heavy cross to change—

“Yet joy would lighten every load
 With but a change of heart,” said he.

FATE AND FREEWILL.

FATE locked her in a narrow room:
 There was no light from any side;
 But when accustomed to the gloom
 Long curtained windows she espied.

Then Freewill raised the curtains high,
 And lo, her cell's contracted girth
 Held all the glory of the sky
 And all the beauty of the earth.

NO ESCAPE.

GLUTTON and sluggard! Thus against his name
 Wrote the stern Angel, and with burning flame
 Branded upon his form the mark of shame.

Could he escape the Angel? Nay, not he!
 What earthly power, or what divinity,
 Can set a spirit from its own self free?

UNDER THE ARCHES.

AN arch of blue, an arch of green,
Whichever be above me,
God send a happiness serene
To all the hearts that love me.

For while I walk beneath the blue
Their love is still my solace true,
And when beneath the green I'm laid
'Twill make a sunshine in the shade.

IRONY.

HE failed in all he strove to do;
Then, when his life was over,
Out of his bitter heart there grew
A lucky four-leaved clover.

WHAT LOVE REMEMBERS.

WHAT Love anticipates may die in flower,
What Love possesses may be thine an hour,
But redly gleam in life's unlit Decembers
What Love remembers.

DO YOU REMEMBER ?

Do you remember the drive we took,
Years ago, in the early fall,
When the moonlight lay like the visible look
Of God, deep brooding over all?

The prairie had broken into bloom
Of golden-rod, like a web unrolled,
And there wasn't a tree to cast its gloom
Over all that lustrous sweep of gold.

Never a house for miles and miles
Save our airy castles' columns and towers,
That rose in dimly magnificent piles
Above a foundation of moonlit flowers.

We talked of our hopes and dreams, of how hard
It was to live at the ideal height,
And our future was just as thickly starred
As the sky above us that shining night.

Miles and miles through the loneliness,
A boy and a girl and a slow, slow steed,
The young hearts fluttering to express
Their highest thought and their deepest need.

No hill of hardship, no vale of despair,
But a golden plain and a golden sky.
We felt that life was thrillingly fair,
And cared not to ask the reason why.

Ever so long ago, and we—
How have we drifted each from each!
The road to the height where we longed to be
Is all untraversed by smile or speech.

But still you remember that vanished year
When we rode alone in the smile of God,
And all of our wealth on this mortal sphere
Was poetry, youth and golden-rod.

ALONE.

THE man I cannot comprehend
Is he who dreads alone to be,
Who, if he cannot have a friend,
Would welcome e'en an enemy;

The beggared and unhappy elf
Who craves an alms of words from all,
With no resources in himself
And no internal festival;

Who never felt the shy caress,
When voices failed and footsteps fled,
From the soft hand of Loneliness;
Who never wakened from the dead

The blessed thoughts that shun the crowd,
And over wood and meadow brood,
Where bird and branch and bending cloud
Enweave the spell of solitude;

Who never knew the scholar's lust,
The artist's lone ecstatic day;
Who never strove because he must,
And not for praise or place or pay.

Give me the friend whose honest hand
Glad greeting, glad good-bye, has shown,
Whose soul is fragrant of the land
Where Silence dwelleth all alone.

THE WHITE MOTH.

SHE was new-wedded, you understand,
As frail a thing
As a breath of spring,
When the hosts of winter besiege the land ;

And he was a man with a heart aglow,
Who flamed at the breath
And loved it till death—
Yes, she died not more than a year ago.

But just at the close she called him in
Where she lay like a wraith,
With the light of her faith
In his love on her face from brow to chin.

And said, " Be comforted, dear, my heart,
The soul returns
When deep love burns,
And my only heaven is where thou art.

“As a still white moth I’ll come to you;
Look for me
When the dusk you see,
And the summer lamp and the falling dew.”

He bowed his head her hand above,
And the only word
That his pale lips stirred
Was “love”—and again, “O love, love, love!”

And lo! she had gone beyond his cries,
Beyond the moan
Of his undertone,
The plea of his passionate lips and eyes.

But vainly he watched the summer through;
The twilights came,
And his lamp, aflame,
Only the dust-colored winged things drew.

In winter Fancy’s a vagrant elf;
The summer moth
And the vanished troth
Had faded—he was a moth himself.

And the flame that drew him the most was that
On a rounded cheek;
When nights were bleak
It moved at his side ’neath a picture hat.

And afterwards summer came again,
And he looked with a sigh
As the nights went by
For a satin-white moth, and looked in vain.

But once, as he sat up late, so late,
To write to the girl
Who had set him awlirl
That she was his life, his love, his fate,

The notepaper seemed a trifle thick
At just one place.
He made a grimace,
And turned the sheet over angrily, quick.

And lo! there lay a white moth, dead!
Crushed by his hand,
You understand,
Under the page where he had said

That he loved another. Now do you suppose—
A chance, you say?
Perhaps so—nay,
Of course it must have been—yet—who knows?

COME, O SPRING!

COME, O Spring! unpack thy leaves,
Flood the boughs and flush the gloom;
Brush the cheek of him who grieves
With a branch of apple-bloom.

Mock at care with all thy birds,
Pierce despair with all thy beams,
Write upon my heart the words
For the music of thy streams.

LEAFLESS APRIL.

LEAFLESS April, chased by light,
Chased by dark and full of laughter,
Stays a moment in her flight
Where the warmest breezes waft her,
By the meadow brook to lean,
Or where winter rye is growing,
Showing in a lovelier green
Where her wayward steps are going.

Blithesome April, brown and warm,
Showing slimness through her tatters,
Chased by sun or chased by storm—
Not a whit to her it matters.
Swiftly through the violet bed
Down to where the stream is flooding,
Light she flits—and round her head
See the orchard branches budding!

APRIL BUDS.

BUDS on the living tree,
Buds in the heart.
Tree hopes and heart hopes,
Thickly they start.

If to the cold ground
All the hopes depart,
Trustfully looks the tree,
Why not the heart?

IN APRIL.

WHEN spring unbound comes o'er us like a flood
My spirit slips its bars,
And thrills to see the trees break into bud
As skies break into stars;

And joys that earth is green with eager grass,
The heavens gray with rain,
And quickens when the spirit breezes pass,
And turn and pass again;

And dreams upon frog melodies at night,
Bird ecstasies at dawn,
And wakes to find sweet April at her height
And May still beckoning on.

And feels its sordid work, its empty play,
Its failures and its stains
Dissolved in blossom dew, and washed away
In delicate spring rains.

APPLE BLOSSOMS.

AMID the young year's breathing hopes,
When eager grasses wrap the earth,
I see on greening orchard slopes
The blossoms trembling into birth.
They open wide their rosy palms
To feel the hesitating rain,
Or beg a longed-for golden alms
From skies that deep in clouds have lain.

They mingle with the bluebird's songs,
And with the warm wind's reverie;
To sward and stream their snow belongs,
To neighboring pines in flocks they flee.
O doubly crowned with breathing hopes
The branches bending down to earth
That feel on greening orchard slopes
Their blossoms trembling into birth!

THE FIRST BLUEBIRD.

FIRST, first!

That was thy song that burst
Out of the spring of thy heart,
Incarnate spring that thou art!
Now must the winter depart,
Since to his age-heavy ear
Fluteth the youth of the year.

Low, low,

Delicate, musical, slow;
Lighten, O heaven that lowers,
Blossom, ye fields, into flowers,
Thicken, ye branches, to bowers;
And thou, O my heart, like a stone,
Wilt thou keep winter alone?

THE INDIGO BIRD.

WHEN I see,
 High on the tip-top twig of a tree,
 Something blue by the breezes stirred,
 But so far up that the blue is blurred,
 So far up no green leaf flies
 'Twixt its blue and the blue of the skies,
 Then I know, ere a note be heard,
 That is naught but the Indigo bird.

Blue on the branch and blue in the sky,
 And naught between but the breezes high,
 And naught so blue by the breezes stirred
 As the deep, deep blue of the Indigo bird.

When I hear
 A song like a bird laugh, blithe and clear,
 As though of some airy jest he had heard
 The last and the most delightful word;

A laugh as fresh in the August haze
As it was in the full-voiced April days;
Then I know that my heart is stirred
By the laugh-like song of the Indigo bird.

Joy on the branch and joy in the sky,
And naught between but the breezes high;
And naught so glad on the breezes heard
As the gay, gay note of the Indigo bird.

IN SUMMER RAIN.

How vividly in summer rain
The commonest of tints are seen;
The Robin is a scarlet stain
Against the shining evergreen.

The last scant strawberries—a score
That hid behind the reddening leaves—
Rain-flushed, wind-tossed, are waiting for
Red-lipped or redder-breasted thieves.

The willows, pallid in the sun,
Are sunny in the rainy dark,
A deeper brown the streamlets run,
And deeply black the orchard bark.

And yet, although the clouds are gray,
These freshening tints of every hue
Would intimate a rain at play,
Or at the worst a storm of dew.

The quality of mercy flows
Upon the meadow's thirsty brood,
And every brightening grass-blade shows
The quality of gratitude.

THE SUNFLOWERS.

WHEN lamps are out and voices fled,
 And moonlight floods the earth like rain,
 I steal outside and cross the lane
 And stand beside the sunflower bed;
 Each blind, unopened face is turned
 To where the western glories burned,
 As though the sun might come again,
 With some last word he left unsaid.

When Dawn with slender, shining hand
 Inscribes a message on the wall,
 I follow at the silent call
 To where my tall sun-lovers stand.
 Their wistful heads are lifted high
 Toward the flaming eastern sky,
 As though some voice had turned them all,
 Some secret voice of strong command.

Ah, should I from the windowed height
Keep vigil in the room above,
And see them lightly, surely move
Through the chill stretches of the night,
Would not the heart within me burn,
As loyally I watched them turn,
With sweet undoubting faith and love,
From vanished light to dawning light?

A RAINY MORNING.

THE low sky and the warm wet wind,
And the tender light on the eyes;
A day like a soul that has never sinned,
New dropped from Paradise.

And 'tis oh, for a long walk in the rain,
By the side of the warm wet breeze,
With the thoughts washed clean of dust and stain
As the leaves on the shining trees.

THE WOODSIDE WAY.

I WANDERED down the woodside way,
Where branching doors ope with the breeze,
And saw a little child at play
Among the strong and lovely trees.
The dead leaves rustled to her knees;
Her hair and eyes were brown as they.

“O little child,” I softly said,
“You come a long, long way to me;
The trees that tower overhead
Are here in sweet reality,
But you’re the child I used to be,
And all the leaves of May you tread.”

IN THE GRASS.

FACE downward on the grass in reverie,
I found how cool and sweet
Are the green glooms that often thoughtlessly
I tread beneath my feet.

In this strange mimic wood where grasses lean—
Elf trees untouched of bark—
I heard the hum of insects, saw the sheen
Of sunlight framing dark,

And felt with thoughts I cannot understand,
And know not how to speak,
A daisy reaching up its little hand
To lay it on my cheek.

THE RAIN.

I HEARD my lover pleading
Beneath the ivied pane,
I looked out through the darkness.
And lo, it was the rain!

I heard my lover singing
His low, heart-stirring songs;
I went without and sought him
To whom my soul belongs.

I found him in the darkness,
His tears were on my face;
O sweet, your voice has pierced me,
And your unhurrying pace.

He gave me, as we wandered
Adown the winding lane,
A thousand tender touches
And that heart-stirring strain.

The lamps and fires and faces
No longer did I see;
I walked abroad with Music
And Love and Poetry.

IN JUNE.

THE trees are full, the winds are tame,
The fields are pictures in a frame
Of leafy roads and fair abodes,
Steeped in content too large for name.

Across a slender bridge of night
The luminous days are swift in flight,
As though 'twere wrong to cover song
And scent and greenness from the light.

Within the snowy clouds above
Sits viewless Peace, a brooding dove;
For every nest there beats a breast,
For every love some answering love.

The ways are thronged with angel wings,
The heart with angel whisperings;
And as it seems in happy dreams
The bird of gladness sings and sings.

AMONG THE LEAVES.

THE near sky, the under sky,
The low sky that I love!
I lie where fallen leaves lie,
With a leafy sky above,
And draw the colored leaves nigh,
And push the withered leaves by,
And feel the woodland heart upon me,
Brooding like a dove.

The bright sky, the moving sky,
The sky that autumn weaves.
I see where scarlet leaves fly
The sky the wind bereaves.
I see the ling'ring leaves die,
I hear the dying leaves sigh,
And breathe the woodland breath made sweet
Of all her scented leaves.

THE VISITORS.

IN the room where I was sleeping
The sun came to the floor,
Whose silent thought went leaping
To where in woods of yore
It felt the sun before.

At noon the rain was slanting
In gray lines from the west;
A hurried child all panting
It pattered to my nest
And smiled when sun-carest.

At eve the wind was flying
Bird-like from bed to chair;
Of brown leaves sere and dying
It brought enough to spare,
And dropped them here and there.

At night-time, without warning,
I felt almost to pain
The soul of the sun in the morning,
The soul of the wind and the rain,
In my sleeping-room remain.

A SLOW RAIN.

A DROWSY rain is stealing
In slowness without stop;
The sun-dried earth is feeling
Its coolness, drop by drop.

The clouds are slowly wasting
Their too long garnered store,
Each thirsty clod is tasting
One drop—and then one more.

O ravishing as slumber
To wearied limbs and eyes,
And countless as the number
Of stars in wintry skies,

And sweet as the caresses
By baby fingers made,
These delicate rain kisses
On leaf and flower and blade!

THE SUN IN THE WOODS.

THE sun within the leafy woods
 Is like a midday moon,
 So soft upon these solitudes
 Is bent the face of noon.

Loosed from the outside summer blaze
 A few gold arrows stray;
 A vagrant brilliance droops or plays
 Through all the dusky day.

The gray trunk feels a touch of light,
 While, where dead leaves are deep,
 A gleam of sunshine, golden white,
 Lies like a soul asleep.

And just beyond dank-rooted ferns,
 Where darkening hemlocks sigh
 And leaves are dim, the bare road burns
 Beneath a dazzling sky.

THE HOUSE OF THE TREES.

OPE your doors and take me in,
Spirit of the wood;
Wash me clean of dust and din,
Clothe me in your mood.

Take me from the noisy light
To the sunless peace,
Where at midday standeth Night,
Signing Toil's release.

All your dusky twilight stores
To my senses give;
Take me in and lock the doors,
Show me how to live.

Lift your leafy roof for me,
Part your yielding walls,
Let me wander lingeringly
Through your scented halls.

Ope your doors and take me in,
Spirit of the wood;
Take me—make me next of kin
To your leafy brood.

THE HAY FIELD.

WITH slender arms outstretching in the sun
The grass lies dead;
The wind walks tenderly and stirs not one
Frail fallen head.

Of baby creepings through the April day
Where streamlets wend,
Of child-like dancing on the breeze of May,
This is the end.

No more these tiny forms are bathed in dew,
No more they reach
To hold with leaves that shade them from the blue
A whispered speech.

No more they part their arms and wreathe them close
Again, to shield
Some love-full little nest—a dainty house
Hid in a field.

For them no more the splendor of the storm,
The fair delights
Of moon and star-shine, glimmering faint and warm
On summer nights.

Their little lives they yield in summer death,
And frequently
Across the field bereaved their dying breath
Is brought to me.

THE HUMMING-BIRD.

AGAINST my window-pane
He plunges at a mass
Of buds—and strikes in vain
The intervening glass.

O sprite of wings and fire
Outstretching eagerly,
My soul, with like desire
To probe thy mystery,

Comes close as breast to bloom,
As bud to hot heart-beat,
And gains no inner room,
And drains no hidden sweet.

FALL AND SPRING.

FROM the time the wind wakes
To the time of snowflakes,
That's the time the heart aches
 Every cloudy day;
That's the time the heart takes
Thought of all its heart-breaks,
That's the time the heart makes
 Life a cloudy way.

From the time the grass creeps
To the time the wind sleeps,
That's the time the heart leaps
 To the golden ray;
That's the time that joy sweeps
Through the depths of heart-deeps,
That's the time the heart keeps
 Happy holiday.

THE SONG SPARROW'S NEST.

HERE where tumultuous vines
Shadow the porch at the west,
Leaf with tendril entwines
Under a song sparrow's nest.

She in her pendulous nook
Sways with the warm wind tide,
I with a pen or a book
Rock as soft at her side.

Comrades with nothing to say,
Neither of us intrudes,
But through the lingering day
Each of us sits and broods.

Not upon hate and fear,
Not upon grief or doubt,
Not upon spite or sneer,
These we could never hatch out.

She broods on wonderful things:
Quickening life that belongs
To a heart and a voice and wings,
But—I'm not so sure of my songs!

Then in the summer night,
When I awake with a start,
I think of the nest at the height—
The leafy height of my heart;

I think of the mother love,
Of the patient wings close furled,
Of the sky that broods above,
Of the Love that broods on the world.

FLOWER AND FLAME.

BETWEEN the flowering and the flaming woods,
 All greening in the rain,
 The fields unfold;
 The sun upon the grain
 Outpours its gold,
 And sweet with bloom and dew are nature's moods
 Between the flowering and the flaming woods.

Between the flaming and the flowering woods
 The wind bemoans a host
 Of withered leaves;
 The winter is a ghost
 That grieves and grieves
 Around a ruined house where none intrudes,
 Between the flaming and the flowering woods.

O woods that break in flower or in flame,
 My wingèd days and hours
 Shall meet their doom
 Like to your leaves and flowers;
 Let not your bloom
 And brightness put my flying years to shame,
 O woods that break in flower or in flame!

THE PASTURE FIELD.

WHEN spring has burned

The ragged robe of winter, stitch by stitch,
And deftly turned

To moving melody the wayside ditch,
The pale-green pasture field behind the bars
Is goldened o'er with dandelion stars.

When summer keeps

Quick pace with sinewy, white-shirted arms,
And daily steep

In sunny splendor all her spreading farms,
The pasture field is flooded foamy white
With daisy faces looking at the light.

When autumn lays

Her golden wealth upon the forest floor,
And all the days

Look backward at the days that went before,
A pensive company the asters stand,
Their blue eyes brightening the pasture land.

When winter lifts

A sounding trumpet to his strenuous lips,
And shapes the drifts

To curves of transient loveliness, he slips
Upon the pasture's ineffectual brown
A swan-soft vestment delicate as down.

TWILIGHT.

I SAW her walking in the rain,
And sweetly drew she nigh;
And then she crossed the hills again
To bid the day good-bye:
“Good-bye! Good-bye!
The world is dim as sorrow;
But close beside the morning sky
I’ll say a glad Good-morrow.”

O dweller in the darling wood,
When near to death I lie,
Come from your leafy solitude
And bid my soul good-bye.
Good-bye! Good-bye!
The world is dim as sorrow;
But close beside the morning sky
O say a glad Good-morrow.

THE FAILURE.

A FAILURE, who had ne'er achieved
Self victory, at last lay dead.
"Poor Failure!" thus his neighbors grieved.
"Poor, pitiable wretch," they said,
"His weakness was the worst of crimes,
He failed at least a thousand times."

Meanwhile the Failure gave to God
His vain attempts. Remorsefully
And prostrate on the skyey sod,
"I failed a thousand times," said he.
"Welcome!" rang out the heavenly chimes,
"He strove—he strove a thousand times."

SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS.

UNTO the diamond with a flaw
The perfect pebble spake:
“Alas, poor sister, some great law
Of heaven you did break,

“Since Imperfection’s curse I see
Whene’er your form I view;
But cheer up! some day you may be
A perfect pebble, too.”

HIS TURN.

A GOOD soul once, not without qualms,
 Knocked at the gates eternal,
 And begged of Lazarus an alms
 For use in realms infernal.

“The rich man of whose crumbs you ate
 Needs water. O surprise him
 With just one drop.” He smiled sedate:
 “I fear ’twould pauperize him.

“And then, you know, I can’t revoke
 My rule, which is unswerving:
 I never give to wealthy folk
 Unless they are deserving.”

THE PLOWMAN.

I HEARD the plowman sing in the wind,
And sing right merrily,
As down in the cold of the sunless mould
The grasses buried he.

And now the grasses sing in the wind,
Merrily do they sing;
While down in the cold of the sunless mould
Is the plowman slumbering.

LEGACIES.

UNTO my friends I give my thoughts,
Unto my God my soul,
Unto my foe I leave my love—
These are of life the whole.

Nay, there is something—a trifle—left;
Who shall receive this dower?
See, Earth Mother, a handful of dust—
Turn it into a flower.

THE WHITE GIFTS.

THESE are thy gifts, O Life:

A white frost on the hair,
And a wintry whiteness on the cheek
That once was red and fair.

These are thy gifts, O Love:

A white frost in the veins,
And a deep-snow silence in the soul,
Where once were fiery pains.

And thy great gifts, O Death,

Are in the frost-bound frame,
The ice-locked lips, the white, white peace
That is too deep for name.

BOATING BY STARLIGHT.

THE breeze has washed me clean of cares,
The night has broken Labor's bars;
My soul and I through heavenly airs
Are voyaging among the stars.

Soft shadows wrap the shore, the lake,
The pier, the bridge, the gazing eyes.
In splendid loneliness we take
This jewelled journey through the skies.

AT DUSK.

THE phantom time of day is here.

Some spirit from diviner air
Unto our blindness draweth near,
And in our musing seems to share.

Who hath not in a darkening wood,
At twilight's moment, dimly known
That all his hurts were understood
By some near presence not his own;

That all his griefs were comforted,
His aspirations given release;
And that upon his troubled head
Was laid the viewless hand of Peace.

Too sure for doubt, too sweet for fear,
Unfelt in days of toil and stress;
But when the twilight brings it near
Who hath not felt its tenderness?

THE FISHERMAN.

THE fisher's face is hard to read,
 His eyes are deep and still;
 His boots have crushed a pungent weed
 Beside a far-off rill.
 Oh, early lifted he the latch
 And sped through dew away,
 But when we ask him of the catch
 That was to mark the day,
 He lifts his empty hands and smiles:
 "I fished for hours, I fished for miles."

The fisher has an open mind,
 A meditative heart;
 He walks companioned by the wind
 Or sits alone, apart,
 Within some stream-enchanted dell.
 The fish about him play
 In sweet content. They know full well
 That friends of his are they.
 Dame Nature all his soul beguiles
 With murmurous hours and emerald miles.

But one who trod the path he took
By fragrant woodland ways,
To where the cold trout-haunted brook
Ran thick-leaved from the gaze,
Heard him but sigh, "How fair it is!
My God—and what am I
That Thy most secret harmonies
Should flood the ear and eye?"
At eve with empty hands he smiles:
"I caught the best of hours and miles."

STARS AND FLOWERS.

THE stars enchant the upper skies,
The flowers chain the feet;
They look into each other's eyes,
And flame and fragrance meet.

So will it be when Death unbars
These slender doors of ours,
And turns our spirits into stars,
Our bodies into flowers.

AN OLD INFLUENCE.

A CHILD, I saw familiar things
In sweet imagined guise;
For me the clouds were angels' wings
The stars were angels' eyes.

Not so to-day: the grassless ways
Of older years invite
No wings to whiten common days,
No eyes to hallow night.

Yet when with grief my heart is loud,
Or harsh thoughts leave their scar,
I feel reproach from every cloud,
Reproof from every star.

THE LITTLE NOON.

My life that goes from dark to dark,
 From leaping light to lowering light,
 Must have its little noonday spark
 Of heat and flame before the night.

My little noon! How strong it seems,
 How dazzling fair and deep its tide,
 And yet a million million beams
 Of day have burned before and died.

Long, long ago—a thousand years—
 Was Fear all white and Rage all red?
 Did Love meet Love with shining tears
 That eased the stress of words unsaid?

A thousand years ago did Hope
 Fly outward with tumultuous breast?
 Youth wake at night to sing? Age grope
 Through gathering darkness to his rest?

Back in the ages past was sweet
As sweet as now? Did bitterness
Flavor the very drink and meat?
Did Rapture wear her April dress?

Did strong men give their hands to men,
Their hearts to women? Did the wife
Joy in her budding secret then?
Did children throng the doors of life?

Ah, these had all their little noons,
Yet cradled in the earth they lie,
And still beside them Ocean croons
Her immemorial lullaby.

SEPARATION.

HE went upon a journey,
And she was left at home ;
And yet 'twas he who stayed behind,
And she that far did roam.

For though he went by mountain
And wood and stream and sea,
A little cot enwrapt in green
He saw perpetually.

And she within the green leaves,
Not knowing that he stood
Forever by her, dreamed her way
With him by mount and wood.

Now heaven help these lovers,
And bring her safely home,
Or lead him back along the track
Where she, e'en now, doth roam.

POVERTY'S LOT.

POVERTY bought our little lot,
Flooded with daisy blooms;
Poverty built our little cot
And furnished all its rooms.

Yet Peace leans over Labor's chair,
Joys at the fireside throng,
While up and down on Poverty's stair
Love sings the whole day long.

EARTH'S ANGELS.

ANGEL of Youth, how swift you flew!

Perhaps you're worth a sigh.

Angel of Love, good-bye to you—

Good-bye! Good-bye!

Angel of Work, your strong demand

My soul enliveneth,

Till on my hands you lay YOUR hand,

Angel of Death.

NEWS OF LIFE.

A BIRD flew in at my window:

“That’s news of death,” they said.

O heart life-packed, it was heaven you lacked

As you suffered and strove and fled.

A message of life you bring me:

Caught fast in the strange unknown,

We strive with the gloom in earth’s low room,

Then escape to the skies—our own.

THE SCHOOL OF PAIN.

HERE is the hard school kept by Pain,
With pupils sad and white:
While some shed tears like falling rain
From dreary morn till night,

Some knit the brow and clench the fist,
And fill the heart with hate,
And some cross languid wrist on wrist,
And say Pain is their fate;

But those that study very hard,
And learn that Pain can bless,
Are sent out in a leafy yard
To play with Happiness.

UNHEARD CRITICISM.

I TALKED with you to-day, all three,
Two of you lurked unseen:
Yourself, the boy you used to be,
And the man you might have been.

You said that hopes to dead buds turned,
That love was but a dream,
Ambition soon to ashes burned,
Joy was a fleeting gleam.

You never saw that constantly
They smiled at you unseen—
The ardent boy you used to be,
The man you might have been.

REMINDER.

BOLD as thou art
There cometh one more bold
To turn thy strenuous heart
All masterless and cold.

Unmoved, strong-stayed
Art thou? Yet cometh one
Whose whisper will persuade
Thee with him to be gone.

King of the fray?
Lord of the time and race?
And yet shall come the ray
To light thy vacant place.

MY GUARDIAN ANGEL.

WHEN from my task I fain would steal,
And into vacuous languor slip,
With inward bleeding then I feel
My guardian angel's whip.

Or when to empty revelry
I give my spirit, though it sears
And shames that inner self, I see
My guardian angel's tears.

Or when I yield to grief or fear,
Or scorn, or say that life is chaff,
Blown by an idle wind, I hear
My guardian angel's laugh.

THE WORLD WELL LOST.

My one dark love shall fix the day,
 The solemn day when we shall wed;
 Nor know I if on green or gray,
 On winter white or autumn red,

My happy bridal moon shall rise,
 Nor which of all the blossoming Mays
 Shall wreath the gates of Paradise
 Upon my dark love's day of days.

But this I know: her steps will be
 Like rose-leaves falling from the rose,
 Her eyes a fathomless strange sea
 To which my stream of being flows.

And this I know: her lips will rest
 As lightly on the drowsing lid
 As leafy shadows on the breast
 Of some sweet grave all flower-hid.

In some sweet grave all flower-hid
 A thousand times the blooms of May
 Shall visit us the leaves amid,
 When my love, Death, has named the day.

THE WILD JESSAMINE.

(IN THE SOUTH)

THE sun of March is hot and bold,
 The rain of March is loud.
 O jessamine, your cups of gold
 Uplift to sun and cloud;
 To song of bird, to breath of herd,
 To light and wind and dew,
 Lift up, lift up the golden cup,
 And bid me drink with you!

The woods of March are hung with green,
 The green is hung with bloom;
 The olive boughs, O jessamine,
 Let all your gold illume.
 To woodland wine—the drink that pine
 And oak and yeupon brew—
 Lift up, lift up the golden cup,
 And let me drink with you!

The breath of March is violet sweet,
The arms of March are soft;
O jessamine, the time is fleet,
Lift all your cups aloft!
To looks that make the spirit ache—
That pierce, deny, pursue—
Lift up, lift up, the golden cup,
And I will drink with you!

BEGINNING AND END.

ONCE it was, in my life's beginning,
 Roses were tall in their summer beds,
 Dandelions within my fingers
 Thrust their confident golden heads;
 Wading waist-deep amid the daisies,
 Feeling the grasses about me climb;
 Thus it was in my life's beginning,—
 What have you done to me, Father Time?

So shall it be when life has ended:
 Roses shall bloom above my bed,
 Dandelions will know I am lying
 Hidden in grass from foot to head.
 Hidden in grass and hidden in daisies,
 Over my breast I shall feel them climb;
 Thus it will be when life has ended,—
 This will you do to me, Father Time.

COME BACK AGAIN.

CHILD-THOUGHTS, child-thoughts, come back again,
Faint, fitful, as you used to be!
The dusty chambers of my brain
Have need of your fair company,
As when my child-head reached the height
Of the wild rose bush at the door,
And all of heaven and its delight
Bloomed in the flowers the old bush bore.

Come back, sweet long-departed year,
When, sitting in a hollow oak,
I heard the sheep-bells far and clear,
I heard a voice that silent spoke,
And felt in both a vague appeal,
And both were mingled in my dreams
With leaves that viewless breezes feel
And skies clear mirrored in the streams.

Child-heart, child-thoughts, come back again!

Bring back the tall grass at my cheek,

The grief more swift than summer rain,

The joy that knew no words to speak;

The buttercup's uplifted gold

That strives to reach my hands in vain;

The love that never could grow cold—

Child-heart, child-thoughts, come back again!

AT THE WINDOW.

How thick about the window of my life

Buzz, insect-like, the tribe of petty frets;

Small cares, small thoughts, small trials and small
strife,

Small loves and hates, small hopes and small regrets.

If 'mid this swarm of smallnesses remain

A single undimmed spot, with wondering eye

I note before my freckled window-pane

The outstretched splendor of the earth and sky.

AT DAWN.

A SPIRIT through
My window came when earth was soft with dew,
Close at the tender edge of dawn, when all
The spring was new,

And bore me back
Along her rose-and-starry tinted track,
And showed me how the full-winged day emerged
From out the black.

She knew the speech
Of all the deep-pink blossoms of the peach,
Told in my ear the meanings of the trees,
The thoughts of each.

Explained to me
The language of the bird and frog and bee,
The messages the streams and rivers take
Unto the sea.

And now when I
Roam this strange earth beneath a stranger sky,
Soft syllables of that forgotten speech,
Faint as a sigh,

Come back again,
With sweet solicitings that urge like pain
And brood like love—as full of light and dark
As April rain.

RESPONSIVENESS.

THE leaves within the orchard walls
Give to the wind at play
Light-hearted plunges, leaps and falls,
Throughout the summer day.
And yet with still, unswerving power
The fruit is ripening hour by hour.

So have I seen a spirit strong
Give to a passing breeze
Of jest and laughter, mirth and song,
Compliant courtesies;
And his soul's purpose lost no whit
Of that great strength that flowed to it.

BITTER-SWEET.

ROSE-LEAF damsel, tell me this—

 You with your seventeen years—
How much honey is in a kiss,
 And how much salt in tears?

“Nay,” she said, “such words, I wis,
 Are not for my maiden ears.
How should I know the sweet of a kiss
 Or the bitterness of tears?”

White-haired woman, whose grief and bliss
 Overrun seventy years,
Tell me true, does the sweet of a kiss
 Outweigh the bitter of tears?

“Yea,” she said, “but the bitterness
 Enmixed with the sweet appears:
My life’s most tender and treasured kiss
 Is kept in the brine of tears.”

THE BRIDE OF DEATH.

BUT tell us of the bride, we said.

“So one with him she seemed to be,
The bridegroom’s kiss upon her lips
Lay almost visibly.

“Her dress? Oh, roses, roses white,
That heaped the hands, the neck, the breast
Of her, the whitest rose of all
That ever bridegroom pressed.

“A glad look? Yea, the raptured look
Of one that drops from out her slim
Sweet hands all other gifts of life
To hold them out to him.

“Her dower? She brought him nothing save
Her loveliness, her life, her breath;
He gave her wealth. And title? Yea,
The old, old name of Death.”

PITY ME NOT.

PITY me not: it makes me pitiable.

Grieve not for me, 'twill set me grieving, too.
Come not forebodingly but courage-full,

And speak the shining word that's strong and true.
If you would have me fearless, have no fears;

If you would have me light and sorrow-free,
Then give your steps the music of the spheres,
Make your eye steadfast as eternity.

WORK.

WE must work to live—

Not body-life alone, but soul-life.

If to our work ourselves we do not give,

Our thoughts, our aspirations and our whole life,
Then days become a torture, moments wound,

The lightest hours are leaden at the core,
And oftentimes we hear that awful sound—
Time's ocean with its spirit-crushing roar.

A LINE FROM EMERSON.

To thy soul's highest instincts, Oh, be true,

Though thick around thy heaven-girt solitude

The earth's low aims, low thoughts, low wants
shall teem.

The myriad voices of the world shall sue

With scorn, persuasive wile, or clamors rude.

“But thou, God's darling, heed thy private dream!”

THE FIELDS OF DARK.

THE wreathing vine within the porch
Is in the heart of me,
The roses that the noondays scorch
Burn on in memory;
Alone at night I quench the light,
And without star or spark
The grass and trees press to my knees,
And flowers throng the dark.

The leaves that loose their hold at noon
Drop on my face like rain,
And in the watches of the moon
I feel them fall again.
By day I stray how far away
To stream and wood and steep,
But on my track they all come back
To haunt the vale of sleep.

The fields of light are clover-brimmed,
Or grassed or daisy-starred;
The fields of dark are softly dimmed,
And safely twilight-barred;
But in the gloom that fills my room
I cannot fail to mark
The grass and trees about my knees,
The flowers in the dark.

GREEN BOUGHS OF HOME.

GREEN boughs of home, that come between
Mine eyes and this far distant scene,
I see, whene'er my thought escapes,
Your old serene familiar shapes;

Each lissom willow tree that dips
Into the stream her golden whips,
The sassafras beside the gate,
Where twilight strollers linger late;

The hemlock groups that dimly hold
Their own against the noonday gold,
The maple lines that give the view
A green or luminous avenue;

Those oldest apple trees whose forms
Have braved a hundred years of storms,
And turn a face as blithe and free
To greet their second century;

The younger orchard's heavy edge,
Framed in the honey locust hedge;
Fruit-flushed, snow-burdened or bloom-bright,
It comes to my home-longing sight;

The billowy woods across the road,
Where all the winds of heaven strode,
And sang in every towering stem,
Would that I were at home with them!

For under these down-bending boughs
A thousand tender memories house.
Oh, while your old companions roam,
Your peace be theirs, green boughs of home!

EARTH'S SILENCES.

How dear to hearts by hurtful noises scarred
 The stillness of the many-leavèd trees,
 The quiet of green hills, the million-starred
 Tranquility of night, the endless seas
 Of silence in deep wilds, where nature broods
 In large, serene, uninterrupted moods.

Oh, but to work as orchards work—bring forth
 Pink bloom, green bud, red fruit and yellow leaf,
 As noiselessly as gold proclaims its worth,
 Or as the pale blade turns to russet sheaf,
 Or splendid sun goes down the glowing west,
 Still as forgotten memories in the breast.

How without panting effort, painful word,
 Comes the enchanting miracle of snow,
 Making a sleeping ocean. None have heard
 Its waves, its surf, its foam, its overflow;
 For unto every heart, all hot and wild,
 It seems to say, "Oh, hush thee! hush, my child!"

IF ONE MIGHT LIVE.

IF one might live ten years among the leaves,
 Ten—only ten—of all a life's long day,
 Who would not choose a childhood 'neath the eaves
 Low-sloping to some slender footpath way?

With the young grass about his childish feet,
 And the young lambs within his ungrown arms,
 And every streamlet side a pleasure seat
 Within the wide day's treasure-house of charms.

To learn to speak while young birds learned to sing,
 To learn to run e'en as they learned to fly;
 With unworn heart against the breast of spring,
 To watch the moments smile as they went by.

Enroofed with apple buds afar to roam,
 Or clover-cradled on the murmurous sod,
 To drowse within the blessed fields of home,
 So near to earth—so very near to God.

How could it matter—all the after strife,
The heat, the haste, the inward hurt, the strain,
When the young loveliness and sweet of life
Came flood-like back again and yet again?

When best begins it liveth through the worst;
O happy soul, beloved of Memory,
Whose youth was joined to beauty as at first
The morning stars were wed to harmony.

UNHEARD NIAGARAS.

WE live among unheard Niagaras.
The force that pushes up the meadow grass,
That swells to ampler roundness ripening fruit,
That lifts the brier rose, were it not mute,
Would thunder o'er the green earth's sunlit tracts
More loudly than a myriad cataracts.

HOME.

WHEREVER on far distant farms
 The orchard trees lift bounteous arms,
 The lane is grape-leaved, woodland dense,
 The chipmunk leaps the zigzag fence,
 The horses from the plow's last round
 Drink with a deep sweet cooling sound,
 And with the thin young moon afloat
 Comes up the frog's heart-easing note,
 And tree-toads' endless melody,

Oh, that is home,
 Is restful home to me.

Whenever on a distant street
 Two charming eyes I chance to meet,
 The look of one that knows the grace
 Of every change on nature's face,
 Whose sea-like soul is open wide
 To breezes from the farther side,
 Whose voice and movement seem to give
 The knowledge of how best to live
 And how to live most happily,

Oh, that is home,
 Is blessed home to me.

LIMITLESSNESS.

BEYOND the far horizon's farthest bound
A farther boundary lies;
No spirit wing can reach the utmost round,
No spirit eyes.

The soul has limitations such as space,
Such as eternity;
The farthest star to which thou setst thy face
Belongs to thee.

UNSPOKEN.

MY lover comes down the leafy street
Through tenderly falling rain;
His footsteps near our portal, veer,
Go past—then turn again.

Oh, can it be he is knocking below,
Or here at my door above!
So gentle and small it sounds in the hall,
So loud in the ear of love.

But never a word of love has he said,
And never a word crave I,
For why should one long for the daylight strong
When the dawn is in the sky?

Oh, a dewy rose garden is the house,
A garden shut from the sun;
The breath of it sweet floats up as my feet
Float down to my waiting one.

But if ever a word of love thinks he,
It falls from his heart still-born;
Who bends to the rose does not haste to close
His hand around bud and thorn.

The beautiful soul that is in him turns
His beautiful face a gleam;
My own soul flies to feast in his eyes,
Where the silent love-words teem.

Our talk is of books and of thoughts and moods,
Of the wild flowers in the rain,
And he leans his cheek when we do not speak
On his chair where my hand had lain.

Yet never a word of love does he say,
And never a word crave I;
For the faint green May would wither away
At the quick touch of July.

And at last—at last, we look our last,
And the dim day grows more dim;
But his eyes still shine in these eyes of mine,
And my soul goes forth with him.

For though not a word of love does he say,
Still never a word crave I;
For the words of earth are little worth
When a song drops out of the sky.

UNDER THE KING.

LOVE with the deep eyes and soft hair,
 Love with the lily throat and hands,
 Is done to death, and free as air
 Am I of all my King's commands.

How shall I celebrate my joy?
 Or dance with feet that once were fleet
 In his adorable employ?
 Or laugh with lips that felt his sweet?

How can I at his lifeless face
 Aim any sharp or bitter¹ jest,
 Since roguish destiny did place
 That tender target in my breast?

Nay, let me be sincere and strong;
 I cannot rid me of my chains,
 I cannot to myself belong,
 My King is dead—his soul still reigns.

STRENGTH.

For strength we ask
For the ten thousand times repeated task,
The endless smallnesses of every day.

No, not to lay
My life down in the cause I cherish most.
That were too easy. But, whate'er it cost,

To fail no more
In gentleness toward the ungentle, nor
In love toward the unlovely, and to give,

Each day I live,
To every hour with outstretched hand its meed
Of not-to-be-regretted thought and deed.

THE OLD HOME.

THE house we used to live in looks at us
So wistfully as we go driving by;
The wind that makes its lone tree murmurous
Flies swiftly after with entreating sigh.
“Come back, come back,” we hear it low implore;
“Lift up the grass-choked gate, the earth-stained door,
And enter in your childhood’s home once more.”

Ah, no, let us make merry with light speech
Of newer days and thrust the past aside.
Close to that door the baby used to reach
The knob and play with it—before he died.
He used to sleep on the broad window-sill,
A sunbeam on his curls. No, not that hill,
This level road. Drive fast—oh, faster still!

How small it was! Before the birds have grown
They lie so warmly in one tiny nest;
But all the world is theirs when they are flown
And foreign roofs replace the mother's breast.
Ah, well, God careth. See, before us now
The ampler home beneath its stately bough.
Lift up the saddened heart and clear the brow.

For in that empty nest beyond the hill
Are blessed shadows at immortal ease:
The sun-crowned baby on the window-sill,
The happy children underneath the trees.
Old house, look not so piteous! Thou art
Of larger lives the very sweetest part,
The first love of the unforgetting heart.

THE DESERTED HOUSE.

WITH sagging door and staring window-place,
And sunken roof it stands among its trees,
Befriended by the boughs that interlace
Between it and the light ghost-footed breeze.

Poor human nest, how desolately torn!
Yet in these ragged rooms young children slept,
And on this floor, all broken and forlorn,
The baby with the sunshine daily crept.

See where some older "Ruth" and "Archie" stood,
And marked their names a yard space from the
ground.

That little height where all of sweet and good
Within the narrow plot of home is found.

Such tiny sleeping-rooms, with space for naught
Except a place to dress, a place to dream,
A book, a little shelf, a good-night thought,
A childish treasure brought from field or stream.

Upon this curbstone, picking bit by bit
The grass that grew before the cottage door,
The blessed baby sat, examining it
As one who ne'er had seen its like before.

Here by the window, in her willow chair,
The mother sewed and sang a low refrain.
Are those the patches from her piece-bag there?
Nay, they are leaves that blew in with the rain!

The leaves blow in, the moss is on the roof,
The squirrels bring their treasures from the boughs,
The storm comes, and with dull unhastening hoof
Into this partial shelter stray the cows.

Ah, come away! Some woman's youth lies here,
Some man's fair childhood, dead but wondrous sweet;
Some heart this cot has sheltered holds it dear,
And fills it with old loves and joys complete.

What right have we to pry or speculate?
The sun goes down; the twilight, like a pall,
Encloseth ruined house and porch and gate,
And tender darkness broodeth over all.

THE TWINS.

THE old man and his apple-tree
Are verging close on eighty-three;
'Twas planted there when he was two,
And almost side by side they grew.
How strong and straight they were at eight,
One leafy, one with curly pate!
How fine at twenty, how alive
And prosperous at twenty-five!
What health and grace in every limb,
Was said of it—was said of him!

Then when he blushed, a marriage groom,
The tree outvied the bride in bloom;
And in the after years there played
Within its ample sweep of shade
A little child with cheeks as red
As had the apples overhead.
Her father called the tree his twin,
And surely it was next of kin.

The best of life came to the twain:
The beauty of the stars, the rain,
Soft-stepping, and the liquid notes
That overflow from feathered throats.
Unto the soul that selfish strives
Was borne the fragrance of their lives,
And anxious folk with brow down bent
Bathed in their dewy cool content.
They held their heads up in the storm,
And gloried when the winds were warm;
Their shadows lay but at their feet,
And all of life above was sweet.

And now that they are eighty-three
They're almost as they used to be.
The blossoms are as pink and white,
The old man's heart as pure and light.
The apples—fragrant balls of flame—
Are looking, tasting, just the same.
And just the same his uttered thought
Of mirth and wisdom quaintly wrought.
Through all their years they kept their truth,
Their strength and that sweet look of youth.

THE BLIND MAN.

THE blind man at his window bars
Stands in the morning dewy dim;
The pearly-mantled dawn, the stars
That wait for it, are naught to him.

And naught to his unseeing eyes
The brownness of a sunny plain,
Where worn and drowsy August lies,
And wakens but to sleep again.

And naught to him a greening slope,
That yearns up to the height above,
And naught the leaves of May that ope
As softly as the eyes of love.

And naught to him the branching aisles,
Athrong with woodland worshippers,
And naught the fields where summer smiles
Among her sunburned laborers.

THE BLIND MAN.

The way a trailing streamlet goes,
The barefoot grasses on its brim,
The dew a flower cup o'erflows
With silent joy, are hid from him.

To him no breath of nature calls;
Upon his desk his work is laid;
He looks up at the dingy walls,
And listens to the voice of Trade.

A MIDDAY IN MIDSUMMER.

THE sky's great curtains downward steal,
The earth's fair company
Of trees and streams and meadows feel
A sense of privacy.

Upon the vast expanse of heat
Light-footed breezes pace;
To waves of gold they tread the wheat,
They lift the sunflower's face.

The cruel sun is blotted out,
The west is black with rain,
The drooping leaves in mingled doubt
And hope look up again.

The weeds and grass on tiptoe stand,
A strange exultant thrill
Prepares the dazed, uncertain land
For the wild tempest's will.

The wind grows big and breathes aloud
As it runs hurrying past;
At one sharp blow the thunder-cloud
Lets loose the furious blast.

The earth is beaten, drenched and drowned,
The elements go mad;
Swift streams of joy flow o'er the ground,
And all the leaves are glad.

Then comes a momentary lull;
The darkest clouds are furled,
And lo, new washed and beautiful
And breathless gleams the world!

THE ROADS OF OLD.

THE roads of old, how fair they gleamed,
How long each winding way was deemed;
 In days gone by, how wondrous high
Their little hills and houses seemed.

The morning road, that led to school,
Was framed in dew that clung as cool
 To childish feet as waves that beat
About the sunbeams in a pool;

The river road, that crept beside
The dreamy alder-bordered tide,
 Where fish at play on Saturday
Left some young hopes ungratified;

The valley road, that wandered through
Twin vales and heard no wind that blew—
 The cowbell's clank from either bank
Was all the sound it ever knew;

The woodland road, whose windings dim
Were known to watchers straight and slim;
 How slow it moved, as if it loved
Each listening leaf and arching limb;

The market road, that felt the charm
Of lights on many a sleepy farm,
 When whirring clocks and crowing cocks
Gave forth the market-man's alarm;

The village road, that used to drop
Its daisies at the blacksmith shop,
 And leave some trace of rustic grace
To tempt the busiest eye to stop;

These all renew their olden spell.
With rocky cliff and sunny dell,
 With purling brook and grassy nook,
They bordered childhood's country well.

And we who near them used to dwell
Can but the same sweet story tell,
 That on them went glad-eyed Content;
They bordered childhood's country well.

SEPTEMBER.

BUT yesterday, all faint for breath,
The summer laid her down to die;
And now her frail ghost wandereth
In every breeze that loiters by.
Her wilted prisoners look up
As wondering who broke their chain;
Too deep they drank of summer's cup,
They have no strength to rise again.

How swift the trees, their mistress gone,
Enrobe themselves for revelry!
How wild and vagrant winds upon
The wold are dancing merrily!
With crimson fruits and bursting nuts,
And whirling leaves and flushing streams,
The spirit of September cuts
Adrift from August's languid dreams.

A little while the revellers
Shall flame and flaunt and have their day,
And then will come the messengers
Who travel on a cloudy way.
And after them a form of light,
A sense of iron in the air,
Upon the pulse a touch of might,
And winter's legions everywhere.

THE WIND SPIRIT.

ALONE within the wind I lie,
And reck not how the seasons go:
The winter struggling through its snow,
The light-winged summer flitting by.

I am not of the cloud nor mould,
I move between the stars and flowers,
I know the tingling touch of hours
When all the storms of night unfold.

Within the wind world drifting free
I hear naught of earth's murmurings;
Naught but the sound of songs and wings
Among the tree-tops comes to me.

At night earth stars flash out below,
And heaven stars shine out above;
I look down on the lights of love,
And feel the higher love-lights glow.

THE WIND OF DEATH.

THE wind of death, that softly blows
 The last warm petal from the rose,
 The last dry leaf from off the tree,
 To-night has come to breathe on me.

There was a time I learned to hate
 As weaker mortals learn to love;
 The passion held me fixed as fate,
 Burned in my veins early and late;
 But now a wind falls from above—

The wind of death, that silently
 Enshroudeth friend and enemy!

There was a time my soul was thrilled
 By keen ambition's whip and spur;
 My master forced me where he willed,
 And with his power my life was filled:
 But now the old-time pulses stir

How faintly in the wind of death,
That bloweth lightly as a breath.

And once, but once, at Love's dear feet
I yielded strength and life and heart;
His look turned bitter into sweet,
His smile made all the world complete;
The wind blows loves like leaves apart—

The wind of death, that tenderly
Is blowing 'twixt my love and me.

O wind of death, that darkly blows
Each separate ship of human woes
Far out on a mysterious sea,
I turn, I turn my face to thee.

THE PRAYER OF THE YEAR.

LEAVE me Hope when I am old;
Strip my joys from me,
Let November to the cold
Bare each leafy tree;
Chill my lover, dull my friend,
Only, while I grope
To the dark, the silent end,
Leave me Hope!

Blight my bloom when I am old,
Bid my sunlight cease;
If it need be, from my hold
Take the hand of Peace.
Leave no springtime memory,
But upon the slope
Of the days that are to be,
Leave me Hope!

DEAD LEAVES.

DEAD leaves in the bird's nest,
And after that the snow;
That was where the bird's breast
Tenderly did go,
Where the tiny birds pressed
Lovingly—and lo!
Dead leaves in the bird's nest
Under falling snow.

Dead leaves in the heart's nest,
And after that the snow;
That was where the heart's guest
Brooded months ago,
Where the tender thoughts pressed
Lovingly—and lo!
Dead leaves in the heart's nest
Under falling snow.

A WINTER PICTURE.

AN air as sharp as steel, a sky
Pierced with a million points of fire;
The level fields, hard, white and dry,
A road as straight and tense as wire.

No hint of human voice or face
In frost below or fire above,
Save where the smoke's blue billowing grace
Flies flag-like from the roofs of love.

THE CHICKADEE.

STOUT-HEARTED bird,
 When thy blithe note I heard
 From out the wind-warped tree—
Chick-a-dee-dee!—

There came to me
 A sense of triumph, an exultant breath
 Blown in the face of death.
 For what are harsh and bitter circumstances
 When the heart dances,
 And pipes to rattling branch and icy lea,
Chick-a-dee-dee!

Sing loud, sing loud
 Against that leaden cloud,
 That draggeth drearily,
Chick-a-dee-dee!

Pour out thy free
 Defiance to the sharpest winds that blow
 And still increasing snow.
 By courage, faith and joy art thou attended,
 And most befriended
 By thine own heart that bubbleth cheerily,
Chick-a-dee-dee!

THE PATIENT EARTH.

THE patient earth that loves the grass,
 The flocks and herds that o'er it pass,
 That guards the smallest summer nest
 Within her scented bosom pressed,
 And gives to beetle, moth and bee
 A lavish hospitality,
 Still waits through weary years to bind
 The hearts of suffering human kind.

How far we roamed away from her,
 The tender mother of us all!
 Yet 'mid the city's noises stir
 The sound of birds that call and call,
 Wind melodies that rise and fall
 Along the perfumed woodland wall
 We looked upon with childhood's eyes;
 The ugly streets are all a blur,
 And in our hearts are homesick cries.

The loving earth, that roots the trees
So closely to her inmost heart,
Has rooted us as well as these;
Not long from her we live apart.
We draw upon a lengthening string,
For months perhaps, perhaps for years,
And plume ourselves that we are free,
And then—we hear a robin sing
Where starving grass shows stunted spears,
Or haycart moving fragrantly
Where creaking tavern sign-boards swing;
Then closer, tighter draws the chain—
The man, too old and worn for tears,
Goes back to be a child again.

The greed that took us prisoner
First led our steps away from her;
For lust of gold we gave up life,
And sank heart-deep in worldly strife.
And when Success—beloved name—
At last with faltering footsteps came,
The city's rough, harsh imps of sound
And Competition's crush and cheat
Were in her wreath securely bound;
Her fruits still savored of the street,
Its choking dust, its wearied feet;
Her poorest like her richest prize
Was rotted o'er by envious eyes,

And sickened by the human heat
Of hands that strove to clutch it fast,
And, struggling, gave it up at last.
Not so where nature, summer-crowned,
Makes fields and woods a pleasure-ground,
Sky-blest, wind-kissed, and circled round
With waters lapsing cool and sweet.

O Earth, sweet Mother, take us back!
With woodland strength and orchard joy,
And river peace without alloy,
Flood us who on the city's track
Have followed stifling, sordid years;
Cleanse us with dew and meadow rain,
Till life's horizon lights and clears
And nature claims us once again!

Sonnets

THE LARGER LOVE.

WHEN other poets sing of love, and pour
 The honeyed stream of love's idolatry
 About the feet of some supremest she,
 Until, sweet-saturated to the core,
 Her wings are drowned and can no longer soar,
 I think of my strong lover—like the sea,
 More full of salt than sweetness—challenging me
 For his love's sake to heights unscaled before.

Not his to exhale the airs that dull the brain
 With poison of dense perfume, but to sting
 Thought, feeling, fancy, into luminous deed;
 That through the splendid tumult and the strain
 The form of Love may tower, a god-like thing,
 Crowned, shod and girdled with his richest meed.

THE CLIMBING TREES.

WHERE the great trees went climbing mountain high,
To crown the tops of monster bluffs and throw
Wild beauty on the evening's afterglow,
And, as it were, fence in the burning sky,
I looked up at their tops and questioned why
Their splendid vastness did not bring more low
My petty pride, and teach my soul to know
How insect-like in heart and life was I.

Then of a sudden I remembered how
I, too, have marched, tree-like, up skyey heights
Of your great thoughts, beloved, and have felt
My spirit with their greatness blend and melt.
So have I been made fit for starry flights,
Love-lifted to the utmost then as now.

THE ONE FACE.

WHEN the long miles flew from the flying train,
And carried with them river-bend and bay,
Sky-reaching hills and little streams at play,
Dank marsh and many a fenceless, boundless plain
Freckled with cattle, fields of lustrous grain,
Long rocky stretches, cities smoky gray,
Sparkling at night and one dull roar by day,
And forests darkly glistening after rain;

I looked upon my fellow-travellers
And saw, though each was gazing from his place,
He chiefly viewed the spot from whence he came:
Mount, stream, town, prairie, deeply glistening firs,
Were clustering round the one beloved face,
Of which the outer world was but the frame.

COMRADES FIRST.

NEXT time my lover comes—I often say—

We shall talk love and love and love alone;

Speak in love's faint vibrating undertone,

With breathings tender as the breath of May,

And bendings as of those who bow to pray,

And waverings as of birds but newly flown,

And sweet revealings as of petals blown

From some red rose heart on a woodside spray.

Then when we meet flies forth impetuous speech,

Thought thrust in word as hand within its glove,

The rush of comment and the play of wit,

Opinions wrestling, laughing, each to each

Next time he comes we shall talk love, love, love!

This time keen thought and all the joy of it!

THE PRAIRIE.

CLOTHED in the virginal green of early spring,
Or, later, fragrant with her miles of sweet
Wild roses flushing in the summer heat,
Or mantled in a shining robe a king
Might wear when golden-rod is flowering,
Or thrilled responsive to the dancing feet
Of little laughing rains, or feeling fleet
Yet strong—how strong!—the wind's unwearied wing;

Whate'er her garb, the prairie speaks of love—
Love's virginal beginnings, rosy moods,
Her golden joys and happy, happy tears.
The mighty wing that tireless sweeps above
Her summer sweets and winter solitudes
Is weariless as love's unending years.

ABSENCE.

DEAR gray-winged angel, with the mouth set stern
And time-devouring eyes, the sweetest sweet
Of kisses when two severed lovers meet
Is thine; the cruelest ache in hearts that yearn,
The fears that freeze, the hopes that leap and burn,
Thine—thine! And thine the drum-and-trumpet beat
Of hearts that wait for unreturning feet,
When comes at last the hour of their return.

Of Love's fair ministers thou art the chief.
To jaded souls, asleep beside their vows,
Thou givest hopes, keen joys and vague alarms;
Beneath thy touch the brown and yellow leaf
Turns to pink blossom, and the spring-bright boughs
Frame lovers running to each other's arms.

YOUTH IN AGE.

WHEN younger women stand a breathing space
Before their mirrors, with an inward smile
At burnished hair or slender throat or wile
Of dimpled chin, or nest a rose in lace
And note how perfectly it mates the face,
I, pallid, worn and hollow-templed, pile
My heart with thoughts of secret triumphs, while
Young hopes are mine, young bliss and youth's light
pace.

For when my lover's eyes are fixed on me
There are no years, no hollows, no gray days,
No harsh realities, no endless prose;
But only flowery lanes of poetry,
Through which we wander, lost in sweet amaze
That life could hold such fairness near its close.

MINNEHAHA.

NEAR the slim bridge at Minnehaha Falls,
Below the impetuous current's foaming roar,
I followed down a path that ran before
And led me into Summer's sylvan halls.
Full-boughed and mossy were the mist-clad walls,
While in diminished cadence came the pour,
Attenuated ever more and more
Until it seemed the least of elfin calls.

So is it with the turbulent stream of life:
In youth it storms the soul; grows less and less
As down the middle years our footsteps wend.
We lose at first the tumult and the strife,
Then find with the departing urge and stress
Pure melody before the silent end.

THE RED ROSE.

WHEN all the winds of life were dull and tame
She looked out where her bed of roses burned,
And saw that whether each red bud was turned
Down to the arid earth from which it came,
Or up to Him who shaped its lovely frame,
The infinite perfection of it yearned
To her, because in her the rose discerned
A life of fragrance and a soul of flame.

Ah, weary heart, thou art thyself a rose!
Perfection holds thee in her clinging hand
And whispers to thee all her sweet desire.
Faint not! The most monotonous wind that blows
Shall waft thy fragrance through a bloomless land
And fan thy dulling flame to deeper fire.

POINT DEFIANCE PARK.

DEFIANCE! How that name arouses me!

Her redwood trees, like guardian angels great
And giant-hearted, weave above her gate
The splendor of their leafy canopy.
In their encircling arms upstandeth she,
And breathes defiance to the harshest fate,
To evil-speaking winds, to stormy hate,
To all the waves of her uncertain sea.

But most she feels defiance to the tide
Of mellow sunshine with its days of calm,
And fainting breezes bidding effort cease.
O shining angels walking at my side,
Keep me defiant of life's languorous balm,
Corroding ease and soul-consuming peace!

THERE IS A SOLITUDE.

THERE is a solitude within the heart,
 Unpenetrated by the eye of man.
 At its first dawn, when consciousness began,
 The birds sang strong as at Creation's start,
 The sun illumed the stillness with his dart,
 And through the groves the naked spirit ran
 Rained on by dew-drenched boughs—his end and
 plan
 To be of loveliness the fairest part.

O thou that feels the world's dust mount and mount
 Up to the jaded nostrils, smarting eyes,
 There is a solitude within thy heart;
 Go, wash thyself in that transfiguring fount,
 And feel the primal bliss, the old surprise,
 Discovering how divine a thing thou art.

THE FOLLOWERS.

ONE day I caught up with my angel, she
Who calls me bell-like from a sky-touched tower.
'Twas in my roof-room, at the stillest hour
Of a still, sunless day, when suddenly
A flood of deep unreasoned ecstasy
Lifted my heart, that had begun to cower,
And wrapped it in a flame of living power.
My leader said, "Arise and follow me."

Then as I followed gladly I beheld
How all men baffled, burdened, crossed or curst,
Clutch at an angel's hem, if near or far;
One not-to-be-resisted voice, deep-belled,
Speaks to them, and of those we call the worst,
Lo, each poor blackened brow strains to a Star!

EACH TO HER OWN.

ONE took me to a skyward-climbing vine,
 Behind whose pointed leaves a poet sang
 Soul-stealingly, so that the stones outrang
 In praise of her, and hearts that ache and pine
 Felt through their tears a radiance divine
 From farthest stars, until within them sprang
 Responsive holiness that dulled the pang—
 And said, "Her matchless power might be thine."

Then sharp I called to my light-thoughted muse,
 Running with brook-like rapture through the marsh,
 Her berry-scented garments stained and torn,
 And clothed her in white robe and careful shoes,
 And told her heaven was fair and earth was harsh,
 While she with hanging head looked all forlorn.

AT WAKING.

WHEN I shall go to sleep and wake again
At dawning in another world than this,
What will atone to me for all I miss?
The light melodious footsteps of the rain,
The press of leaves against my window-pane,
The sunset wistfulness and morning bliss,
The moon's enchantment, and the twilight kiss
Of winds that wander with me through the lane.

Will not my soul remember evermore
The earthly winter's hunger for the spring,
The wet sweet cheek of April, and the rush
Of roses through the summer's open door;
The feelings that the scented woodlands bring
At evening with the singing of the thrush?

OUT-DOOR AIR.

BREATHER of hope upon the face that grieves,
Redd'ner of paleness, mocker at despair,
Playground of happy wings that upward fare,
Lover of violets and sodden leaves,
Of roses running to the cottage eaves,
And hay-fields sweet'ning in the sunny glare;
Companion of the heart that knows no care,
And of the budding boughs and bursting sheaves;

Though armed with weapons of the icy north,
Or red with dropping leaves, or fair with flakes,
Or scorched with sun, or wistful in the rain,
Out of my cell your spirit calls me forth,
Out to the splendid open, where the aches
And hurts of life are bathed and healed again.

IN THE CROWD.

HERE in the crowded city's busy street,
Swayed by the eager, jostling, hasting throng,
Where Traffic's voice grows harsher and more strong,
I see within the stream of hurrying feet
A company of trees in their retreat,
Dew-bathed, dream-wrapped, and with a thrush's
 song
Emparadising all the place along
Whose paths I hear the pulse of Beauty beat.

'Twas yesterday I walked beneath the trees,
To-day I tread the city's stony ways;
And still the spell that o'er my spirit came
Turns harshes sounds to shy bird ecstasies,
Pours scent of pine through murky chimney haze,
And gives each careworn face a woodland frame.

THE SNOW-FALL.

THE great, soft, downy snow-fall like a cloak
Descends to wrap the lean world head to feet;
It gives the dead another winding-sheet,
It buries all the roofs until the smoke
Seems like a soul that from its clay has broke;
It broods moon-like upon the autumn wheat,
And visits all the trees in their retreat,
To hood and mantle that poor shivering folk.

With wintry bloom it fills the harshest grooves
In jagged pine stump fences; every sound
It hushes to the footstep of a nun;
Sweet Charity, that brightens where it moves,
Inducing darkest bits of churlish ground
To give a radiant answer to the sun.

LOVE'S PHASES.

LOVE has a thousand phases. Oftentimes
 For very joy of her own life she weeps;
 Or like a timid wistful child she creeps
 To sheltering arms; or like a spirit climbs
 The white heights scaled by poets in their rhymes—
 Imagination's lone and splendid steeps—
 Or drifts with idle oar upon the deeps
 Of her own soul to undiscovered climes.

Here is the rapture of the dying saint,
 The exultation of the mother when
 Upon her breast her first-born faintly stirs
 For the first time; and every morn doth paint
 Upon each rock and tree and stream and glen
 Some inextinguishable look of hers.

GOOD-BYE.

GOOD-BYE, my love! Though multitudes of years
And miles and faces come between us twain,
Though I should never hear your voice again,
Still are you mine, still mine! Not by my tears—
You never made them flow—nor by my fears,
For I was fearless born; but by the rain
Of joys that turned to seas of sunny grain
This heart that showed aforetime slender spears.

Now on my clouded day of life shall come
No loss. The streams of gold that poured from suns
Unseen have turned to gold this harvest heart;
I am all sunlight-colored, and the sum
Of by-gone happiness that through me runs
Will make you mine forever, though apart.

TELEPATHY.

O SOUNDING winds that tirelessly are blowing
 Through the wide starlit spaces of the night;
 O eager rains that sweep the distant height,
 And restless streams impetuously flowing,
 And clouds that will delay not in your going,
 And ships that sail and vanish from the sight,
 And happy birds that stay not in your flight,
 And suns upon your skyey pathway glowing:—

Poor laggards all! One tender thought outstrips you.
 Go, little thought, and tell my love from me
 I care for him to-day as yesterday.
 Ah, how its strength and swiftness doth eclipse you!
 For now the answer comes invisibly,
 And instantly, and in the surest way.

AT PARTING.

GOOD-BYE! Goodbye! My soul goes after thee,
Quick as a bird that quickens on the wing,
Softly as winter softens into spring;
And as the moon sways to the swaying sea,
So is my spirit drawn resistlessly.
Good-bye! Yet closer round my life shall cling
Thy tenderness, the priceless offering
That drifts through distance daily unto me.

O eager soul of mine, fly fast, fly fast!
Take with thee hope and courage, thoughts that thrill
The heart with gladness under sombre skies.
O living tenderness, that no sharp blast
Of bitter fate or circumstance can chill,
My life with thine grows strong or fails or dies.

IN A DARK HOUR.

YES, yes, I know what you would say, and yet

Life is so sweet! life is so very sweet!

Leaves dancing in the sun make quick the beat
Of saddest heart, and Love must still forget
Life's toil and care, its fever and its fret.

How blue the sky shines through the summer's heat,

How merrily the blood defies the sleet;

One golden hour illumines a gray year. Let

Those talk of tears who never knew relief;

For me the hoarded honey of the past

Outlives the wintry interval of pain;

Come loneliness, or lovelessness, or grief,

The memory of days too sweet to last

Shall make my heart run o'er with joy again.

WORDS.

I LIKE those words that carry in their veins
The blood of lions. "Liberty" is one,
And "Justice," and the heart leaps to the sun
When the thrilled note of "Courage! Courage!" rains
Upon the sorely stricken will. No pains
Survive when "Life" and "Light," twin glories, run
From the quick page to some poor soul undone,
And beggar by their glow all other gains.

How splendidly does "Morning" flood our night;
How the word "Ocean" drowns our paltry cares,
And drives a strong wind through our housed-up
grief;
While "Honor" lifts us to the mountain height,
And "Loyalty" the heaviest burden bears
As lightly as a tree a crimson leaf.

TANGLED IN STARS.

TANGLED in stars and spirit-steeped in dew,
The city worker to his desk returns,
While 'mid the stony streets remembrance burns,
Like honeysuckle running through and through
A barren hedge. He lifts his load anew,
And carries it amid the thronging ferns
And crowding leaves of memory, while yearns
Above him once again the open blue.

His letter-littered desk goes up in flowers;
The world recedes, and backward dreamily
Come days and nights, like jewels rare and few.
And while the consciousness of those bright hours
Abides with him, we know him yet to be
Tangled in stars and spirit-steeped in dew.

IN AUGUST.

Now when the grove is stifled to the core,
And all the parchèd grass is summer-killed,
I think of vehement March, and how he filled
These arid roadsides with a murmurous pour
Of rushing streams from an exhaustless store.
This breathless air, to tropic slumber stilled,
Recalls those early passionate winds that thrilled
The spirit, blending with the water's roar.

Just as in rich and dusty-leavèd age
The soul goes back to brood on swelling buds
Of hope, desire and dream, in childhood's clime,
So I turn backward to the spring-lit page,
And hear with freshening heart the deep-voiced
floods
That to the winds give their melodious rhyme.

OCTOBER.

AGAINST the winter's heav'n of white the blood
Of earth runs very quick and hot to-day;
A storm of fiery leaves are out at play
Around the lingering sunset of the wood.
Where rows of blackberries unnoticed stood
Run streams of ruddy color wildly gay;
The golden lane half dreaming picks its way
Through whelming vines as through a gleaming flood.

O warm outspoken earth, a little space
Against thy beating heart my heart shall beat,
A little while they twain shall bleed and burn,
And then the cold touch and the gray, gray face,
The frozen pulse, the drifted winding-sheet,
And speechlessness, and the chill burial urn!

WINTER.

Now that the earth has hid her lovely brood
Of green things in her breast safe out of sight,
And all the trees have stripped them for the fight,
The winter comes with wild winds singing rude,
Hoarse battle songs—so furious in feud
That nothing lives that has not felt their bite.
They sound a trumpet in the dead of night
That makes more solitary solitude.

Against the forest doors how fierce they beat!
Against the porch, against the school-bound boy
With crimson cheek bent to his shaggy coat.
The earth is pale but steadfast, hearing sweet
But far—how far away!—the stream of joy
Outpouring from a bluebird's tender throat.

TO FEBRUARY.

O MASTER-BUILDER, blustering as you go
About your giant work, transforming all
The empty woods into a glittering hall,
And making lilac lanes and footpaths grow
As hard as iron under stubborn snow,
Though every fence stand forth a marble wall,
And windy hollows drift to arches tall,
There comes a might that shall your might o'erthrow.

Build high your white and dazzling palaces,
Strengthen your bridges, fortify your towers,
Storm with a loud and a portentous lip;
And April with a fragmentary breeze,
And half a score of gentle golden hours,
Shall leave no trace of your stern workmanship.

THE SILENT SNOW.

TO-DAY the earth has not a word to speak.

The snow comes down as softly through the air
 As pitying heaven to a martyr's prayer,
 Or white grave roses to a bloodless cheek.

The footsteps of the snow, as white and meek
 As angel travellers, are everywhere—

On fence and brier and up the forest stair,
 And on the wind's trail o'er the moorland bleak.

They tread the rugged road as tenderly

As April venturing her first caress;

They drown the old earth's furrowed griefs and
 scars

Within the white foam of a soundless sea,

And bring a deeper depth of quietness

To graves asleep beneath the silent stars.

